

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **CHATHAM HOUSE GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR BOYS**

Ramsgate

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118934

Headteacher: Mr J Mathews

Lead inspector: Mr M Newton

Dates of inspection: 16<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> September 2003

Inspection number: 259239

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Grammar (selective)  
School category: Foundation  
Age range of pupils: 11 to 18 years  
Gender of pupils: Male  
Number on roll: 776

School address: Chatham Street  
Ramsgate  
Kent  
CT11 7PS

Postcode:

Telephone number: 01843 591075

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr B Turp

Date of previous inspection: May 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Chatham House is a well-established boys' grammar school for pupils aged 11 to 18. It has a good local reputation. The main school is smaller than most but the sixth form, which is open to female students, is larger than most other sixth forms. The school serves a wide area around the port of Ramsgate on the Thanet peninsular, selecting pupils from over 30 local primary schools. The area has pockets of significant deprivation and the intake to the school is not typical of most grammar schools. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (three per cent) is well below the national average (16 per cent) but the school has reason to believe that this is not an accurate reflection of the economic background of some families. Relatively few parents have had experience of higher education. The ability profile is also broader than most selective schools with approximately the top 40 per cent of ability being represented and relatively few from the top ten per cent. The majority of pupils are white but a range of ethnic backgrounds are represented in the school. However, only one pupil requires special English language support. The number of pupils with special educational needs (SEN), mainly because of dyslexia, is below the national average (8 per cent compared with 18 per cent nationally). Only two pupils have statements of SEN. The school has a long history of sporting and cultural achievements and has a Healthy Schools Award and Sportsmark. It is housed on a pleasant site but much of the main building and temporary accommodation is unsatisfactory for current needs.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2494	Mr M Newton	Lead inspector	
9115	Dr T Clarke	Lay inspector	
6138	Mr K Page	Team inspector	Mathematics
24622	Mr D Davies	Team inspector	English
19913	Mr R Garrett	Team inspector	English Post-16
22985	Ms J Sparkes	Team inspector	Science Biology Post-16
8361	Mr M Burley	Team inspector	Chemistry Post-16
32169	Mr B O'Hagan	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
4757	Mr D Morris	Team inspector	Art and design Music
18188	Ms C Thompson	Team inspector	Design and technology
30743	Mr N Cowell	Team inspector	Special educational needs Geography
25744	Mr T Osgerby	Team inspector	History Citizenship
19404	Mr L Schubeler	Team inspector	English as an additional language Modern foreign languages French Post-16
23307	Mr N McDonough	Team inspector	Physical education
15560	Ms L Karmock-Golds	Team inspector	Religious education
10060	Mr D Gutmann	Team inspector	Leisure and Recreation Post-16

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Chatham House is a **good** school with some very good features. It successfully blends together the traditions of a well-established grammar school with an up-to-date approach to raising standards. Pupils come from a wide socio-economic background and a relatively broad ability spectrum is represented in the school. The very good individual support for pupils combined with the predominantly good teaching enables all pupils to achieve well. Taking account of these factors and a very tight budget the school provides good value for money.

#### The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Well above average standards in public tests and examinations.
- A very strong supportive ethos that seeks to achieve the best for each individual pupil.
- A very good range of enrichment activities that develops personal responsibility.
- Aspects of the predominantly good teaching need further development, including the range of teaching strategies and assessment.
- Policies and action plans do not always achieve their intended outcomes.

There has been a good level of improvement in the effectiveness of the school since the last inspection and the key issues raised are being sustained in current improvement plans. Attainment has continued to rise; particularly at Key Stage 3 and in the percentage of pupils who gain the highest grades at GCSE. Literacy skills are being well developed although some key proposals have yet to be implemented. The provision and use of computers and modern technology has improved greatly and is having a positive impact on learning. The standard of middle management has improved but is not yet consistently good. There have been some improvements in provision for spiritual development.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2000	2001	2002	2002
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	A*	A	C
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	n/a	A	n/a	

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average  
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

The achievement of pupils is **good** across the whole school. At the end of Year 9 in national tests in English, mathematics and science pupils achieve well above the national average. Results in mathematics are particularly high. This is also true in other subjects with the exception of information and communication technology (ICT) where standards are average and in design and technology where they are below average. GCSE results are also well above average and in 2001 were in the top five per cent nationally. The trend in improvement, based on average point scores, is in line with the national trend. The achievement of pupils with SEN is also good as a result of the effective support they receive. The average point score achieved by students in the sixth form is above the national average and the pass rate is very high. Over a third of students achieve A and B grades in their A level subjects. Although males attain higher grades than females the achievement of both sexes is equally good in relation to their prior attainment.

The school does not appear to achieve so well when compared with similar schools but results have to be seen in the light of a wider ability profile on entry than is usual in grammar schools and the less favourable socio-economic background from which many pupils come.

Pupils show an increasing maturity and their willingness to take responsibility is excellent. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**. Pupils' attitudes to school are very positive and are reflected in very good attendance. Pupils respond to the high expectations the school sets in regard to conduct and behaviour is very good. This helps create an inclusive and friendly school ethos.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The school provides a **good** quality education. Teaching is **good** overall and has improved since the last inspection. In Years 7 to 9 over seven out of ten lessons are good or very good and in Years 10 and 11 this increases to eight out of ten and to over nine out of ten in the sixth form. Only four unsatisfactory lessons were seen during inspection. There are examples of very good lessons in nearly all subjects. In these lessons pupils are learning well as their needs are being met through the use of a range of challenging teaching strategies. These features need strengthening in other lessons. ICT is now being used more frequently to enhance learning than at the time of the last inspection.

The level of care and support for pupils is one of the school's strengths as is the opportunities it provides for enrichment activities including a wide range of extra-curricular activities. In spite of the limitations, and generally poor environment, imposed by its often unsatisfactory accommodation, staff and pupils create a well-ordered sense of community where learning is valued.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership of the headteacher and key staff is **good**. There is a clear, shared vision to improve the quality of teaching and raise standards. This is reflected in the school improvement plan where subject plans focus on whole school priorities. The effectiveness of the school's management is **satisfactory**. There are clear policies and procedures in place but these are not consistently applied across the school leading to varying degrees of improvement. The governance of the school is overall **satisfactory** with many good features. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have appropriate structures for monitoring. However, they fail to meet fully statutory requirements in respect of a daily act of collective worship and some aspects of design and technology do not meet requirements in Years 7 to 9. In these respects governance is unsatisfactory.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Both parents and pupils have an overwhelmingly positive view of the school. The major concern voiced at the parents' meeting was over the state of the accommodation and this is fully justified. A small number of pupils and parents expressed concerns about poor behaviour and incidents of harassment. In the inspectors' view the school is sensitive to these issues and strategies such as peer mentoring are proving effective in dealing with these forms of unacceptable behaviour.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Broaden teaching strategies to meet the learning needs of all pupils.
- Ensure that assessment procedures inform pupils on how to improve on a regular basis and set short-term targets to help raise their achievement.
- Focus more rigorously on the consistent implementation of school policies and action plans.
- Meet National Curriculum requirements in design and technology in Years 7 to 9.

# Sixth Form Summary

## OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very effective** sixth form where students' opportunities for learning are maximised by well-planned, individual programmes that are systematically monitored. Students receive a high level of personal support which they value and benefit from. In spite of poor accommodation they achieve well academically and have very good opportunities for personal development. The provision is cost-effective.

### The main strengths and weaknesses

- Very effective leadership and good management help ensure high standards.
- Good and very good teaching and learning that help ensure high achievement.
- High recruitment, attendance and retention rates.
- Good and improving examination results, particularly in higher grades.
- Inadequate and generally uninspiring accommodation.
- The limited time given to the religious studies elements of general studies.

## QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<b>Good.</b> Students benefit from the considerable expertise of teachers, although teaching methods are limited. Standards are well above average.
French	<b>Good.</b> Standards at A level are very high as a result of very good teaching. AS results are below expectation and the numbers continuing to A level are low.
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Since 2001 A level results have improved and been consistently above average as a result of good teaching and leadership.
Biology	<b>Good.</b> Teaching and learning are good. Students are highly motivated and keen to succeed. Results are well above national averages.
Chemistry	<b>Good.</b> Standards are well above average. Students' achievement is good. Teaching is good or better. Work in students' files is not monitored.
Information and communication technology	<b>Good.</b> Standards are improving and students now achieve well as a result of good quality resources and very good teaching.
Geography	<b>Good.</b> Fieldwork opportunities are excellent. A level standards show a trend of improvement. Some teaching is over prescriptive.
History	<b>Good.</b> Above average results and good standards of work as a result of good teaching and learning. Accommodation is unsatisfactory.
Music	<b>Very good.</b> Results at AS and A level are very high as a result of consistently good teaching. Very good opportunities for performing.
Leisure and tourism	<b>Very good.</b> Good teaching helps students develop good attitudes to work, which in turn helps them to make very good progress. Standards are very high.

*The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.*



In addition to the focus subjects a number of other subjects were sampled:

**Physics:** The teaching in a Year 12 lesson was good with students building successfully on their A/B grades at GCSE.

**Religious studies:** Standards are above average and overall progress and achievement are satisfactory.

**Sociology:** Good use is made of questioning to develop students' understanding successfully.

**Psychology:** The teaching was good with high levels of challenge and participation.

**Art:** One lesson was observed in creative problem solving which included good work in sketchbooks.

**Media studies:** The teaching in a Year 13 lesson was very good.

**Sports science:** Overall teaching was good. Standards are above average.

**Economics:** Teaching was very good. Economic principles were being successfully understood.

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

The level of support, advice and guidance offered to sixth-formers is very good. There is a highly effective induction process which helps ensure that students choose a course of study that best suits their needs and aspirations. The success of this is reflected in the high retention rates. The process also helps them integrate socially particularly for those joining from other schools; mainly girls. Their time is carefully structured, expectations are high, and checks and monitoring are rigorous. Students recognise and appreciate the efforts being made on their behalf. There is regular assessment of work and they have a weekly tutorial that enables tutors to discuss progress, set targets and agree action plans. This level of support helps maintain a high level of achievement. A majority of students aspire to enter higher education and the school has established good links with a number of universities that students are able to visit. They have access to a careers library and to a personal adviser from Connexions.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

The leadership is **very good** and there is **good** management of the sixth form. The head of sixth form leads an effective team of staff that includes an assistant and a team of tutors. There is good female representation in the tutor team to reflect the mixed gender of the sixth form. There are clear policies and procedures for staff and students that help achieve the high aspirations set. There is a good improvement plan that is clearly related to the school improvement plan. The teaching and learning monitored by the head of sixth form is thorough, and appropriate advice and support is given to teachers, particularly new teachers. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection. Data is used well to monitor the standards being achieved in the sixth form as well as to set targets for students. The sixth form's self-evaluation is very good and it strives to improve quality and standards. As a result of the high quality of leadership and good management numbers continue to rise and retention rates are high.

## **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Overall students are very positive. The school carries out regular surveys of students' views and takes appropriate action on any issues that emerge. In the most recent survey over nine out of ten students enjoyed their sixth form experience. They believed they had received helpful advice about courses and had been adequately supported in settling into the sixth form. An equal number were also complimentary about the help teachers gave them. This group also recognised improvements in the way their work was assessed and how informed they were about their progress and about careers advice. An earlier survey had revealed that about four out of ten students were not satisfied about these aspects. This has now dropped to two out of ten following remedial action by the school; a clear indication of how well the school involves students. On all aspects at least seven out of ten students are satisfied with their sixth form experience and no significant concerns were raised during inspection. Female students are particularly complimentary about the way they have been integrated into the school.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AND STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9 in national tests in English, mathematics and science are well above the national average. In GCSE examinations overall results are also well above average. In relation to their capability, pupils' achievement is good and this is reflected in the standard of work seen during inspection.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well above average results in public tests and examinations.
- Taking account of standards on entry and examination results, the achievement of pupils is good across the whole school.
- A trend of improvement, particularly in Years 7 to 9 and in higher grades in GCSE.
- At the end of Year 9, standards in other subjects are nearly always above average except in design and technology where they are below average.
- Room for further improvement to bring the school more in line with other grammar schools nationally.

#### Commentary

1. Pupils enter the school with results in national tests aged 11 in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science that are above the national average. However, there is a wider spread of ability than is usual in many grammar schools with a number of pupils entering the school at below national expectations in some aspects of the core subjects. Standardised tests used by the school on entry confirm the breadth of ability and also indicate that pupils in the top ten per cent of the ability spectrum nationally are not as well represented in this school as in most other grammar schools.

#### *Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2002*

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	40.0 (40.2)	33.3 (33.0)
mathematics	44.6 (42.8)	34.7 (34.4)
science	39.4 (37.7)	33.3 (33.1)

*There were 118 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and as a result standards in the core subjects are well above average including the percentage of pupils gaining Level 6 or above. There has been evident improvement since the last inspection with a reduction in the number of pupils achieving Level 5 and an increase in Levels 6 and 7. The most notable increase has been in English and mathematics, with some pupils in mathematics reaching Level 8. This indicates good achievement in relation to their capability. It also reflects the efforts that the school has made since the last inspection to improve teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9.

3. The average point scores indicated in the above chart reflect the achievement of a cohort of pupils overall. Although they are above the national average, the trend has been fairly level over recent years and has been below the national trend. However, improved results again in 2003 may change this situation. When results in the core subjects are compared with similar schools care needs to be taken. Each cohort is just over one hundred so that one pupil represents nearly one percentage point. Taking this into account the pupils achieve well in the core subjects in relation to schools nationally and to those with pupils of similar prior attainment at age 11.

4. Standards are also above average in most other subjects. In ICT, standards on entry are in line with expectations and they are also in line at the end of Year 9 indicating satisfactory progress. In design and technology, standards are below the national average due to teaching that does not challenge pupils and the content of the curriculum that does not meet National Curriculum requirements. In art, where pupils enter the school below national expectation, good progress and achievement are made and by the end of Year 9 standards achieved are above expectation.

**Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002**

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	90.9 (100)	49.8 (48.3)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97.0 (100)	90.8 (90.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98.0 (100)	96.0 (96.0)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	45.4 (n/a)	34.2 (n/a)

*There were 97 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

5. GCSE results in 2002 are well above average although the overall percentage of pupils gaining five or more A\* - C grades dropped. In 2001 every pupil gained five A\* - C grades and the school was placed in the top five per cent of schools nationally. It gained a national Achievement Award in that year. In 2003 the percentage of A\* - C grades has risen although those achieving five or more is only slightly better than last year. School data indicates that the percentage achieving A\* and A grades has now risen to approaching a third of all entries.

6. Based on average point scores the trend in improvement at GCSE is in line with the national trend. When compared with schools with similar attainment at the end of Year 9 the school does not do as well as others, even making allowances for the relatively small cohort of pupils. This is reflected in the work seen during the inspection which was judged to be good, but with improved teaching and more focused monitoring has the potential to be better.

7. In English nearly all pupils have gained an A\* - C grade in recent years. Results in mathematics are also very good with all pupils in 2001 and 2002 gaining the higher grades, some at the end of Year 10. In the higher sets in science, studying three sciences, results are similarly very good with 100 per cent gaining A\* - C grades. In the majority of other subjects over eight out of ten pupils gain A\* - C grades at GCSE. The exceptions in 2002 were in history and French and in both of these subjects there have been improvements in 2003. School data also shows that in 2003 design and technology and German were noticeably weaker than other subjects.

8. The achievement of pupils with SEN in both Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 is also good as a result of the effective support they receive. There is no specific identification of gifted and talented pupils but pupils of higher ability generally make similar progress to others but could often do better.

**Sixth Form**

A level results are above the national average and students achieve well in relation to their capability.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very high pass rate at A level and AVCE.
- Good improvement in examination results, particularly in higher grades.
- Good achievement for both sexes.

### Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2002

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	98.1 (92.0)	94.8
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	37.6 (35.7)	39.4
Average point score per pupil	333.6 (287.0)	263.3

*There were 98 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

9. Entry to the sixth form is based on students having appropriate GCSE grades. The minimum entry base is five GCSEs at grades A\* to C with a B grade for initial AS level entry. Students from neighbouring non-selective schools therefore are able to qualify for entry. As a result the ability profile is more comprehensive than the main school.

10. The well-structured ethos and good teaching enable all students to achieve well. In 2002 the average point score achieved by students overall was above the national average. Although it was below the national average for females the achievement of both sexes is equally good in relation to their prior attainment. This places the school in the top 25 per cent of post-16 providers.

11. The pass rate has improved since the last inspection when it was 93 per cent. In 2002 it was 98 per cent and is likely to be confirmed as the same in 2003. What is also significant is the improvement in A and B grades at A level. These have risen in the last three years. In 2002 over a third of students achieved A and B grades. In 2003 school data indicates that this has risen to nearly half. In most subjects therefore there was a 100 per cent pass rate. The exceptions being business studies, computer studies, general studies and design and technology. In 2003 the exceptions were chemistry, general studies and sociology. There is no consistently weaker, or indeed stronger, subject in grade achievement. The introduction of the AVCE Leisure and Tourism course has been particularly successful. Students achieve consistently high grades and average point scores are above the national average.

### Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **very good**. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**. Attendance is **very good** and punctuality is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy coming to school very much and their views of the school are very positive.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good and there are very few exclusions.
- Relationships across the school are very good creating a harmonious community.
- Pupils' moral and social development is very good.
- There is a small number of incidents of inappropriate behaviour and verbal harassment.

### Commentary

12. Attendance is very good; it is well above the national average and the school has very few long-term absences. Pupils' punctuality is good overall. The number of pupils signing in as late is at about the level expected for a school of this size. Some of those who do arrive late do so for acceptable reasons, such as the late arrival of a train or a bus. The school has helped ensure punctuality at lessons by allocating a movement time at appropriate points in the day. It monitors attendance effectively.

## Attendance

### Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.4	School data	0.2
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

13. Pupils' have a very positive attitude to school reflected in the high level of attendance and their commitment to study. Most pupils think highly of their teachers and relationships are generally very good. The school stimulates in them a very good desire to learn, raising their self-esteem and giving them confidence. They respond positively to the very high expectations the school has of all its pupils. Their willingness to be enterprising and take responsibility is excellent.

14. Pupils speak very highly of the wide range of extra-curricular activities available, both sporting and non-sporting. A very good feature of the sporting activities is the fact that, by having various levels of inter-house competitions, those that are not good enough to be picked for school teams still have the opportunity to take part in team activity. Inter-house activities in a number of other areas, such as public speaking, ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to take part in a competitive way. This is very inclusive and contributes significantly to pupils' personal development. Almost all take part in one activity or another and pupils appreciate the commitment and dedication of staff.

## Exclusions

### Ethnic background of pupils

### Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	699	11	0
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	12	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	11	1	0
No ethnic group recorded	42	0	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

15. Pupils' behaviour is very good in and out of lessons. There are few exclusions and none that are permanent. Pupils are polite and courteous and, in spite of the narrowness of the corridors and the staircases, they move around the school in an orderly manner. A number of pupils indicated that they were concerned about behaviour at the school and at incidents of verbal harassment. During inspection further questioning of pupils revealed that these incidents are usually verbal, minor, and staff deal with them very well. Both pupils and most parents recognised that any serious incidents of

bullying were dealt with swiftly and effectively. The introduction of a peer-mentoring programme has been very effective in reducing any stress, however limited, caused to pupils. Mentors do not hesitate to inform teachers where appropriate whilst safeguarding confidentiality. The school is vigilant and pro-active in ensuring high standards of behaviour. The mentoring programme, as well as increased supervision of certain outside areas, was a direct result of a consultation exercise.

16. Pupils' moral and social development is very good. They show a very good level of responsibility for the school and wider community. The school promotes fairness in all its activities and pupils show respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. The relatively small number of pupils from ethnic minorities is well integrated into the school. Pupils show a good level of spiritual awareness, which is particularly enhanced in assemblies and by, for example, music. However, in some assemblies the opportunity for spiritual development is missed. Pupils show a very good appreciation of their own cultural traditions but there is less evidence that the school develops sufficiently their understanding of wider cultural diversity.

## **Sixth Form**

Student attitudes and behaviour are **excellent**. Their attendance and punctuality are **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The excellent way students take on responsibility and act as good role models.
- The high level of participation of students in school and community activities.
- The willingness of students to take part in discussion and debate when outside speakers visit the school.
- A small number of prefects are not always keen to take on the duties that come with the appointment.

## **Commentary**

17. Student attendance is very good. The school applies the same criteria for attendance in the sixth form as it does for the rest of the school with the marking of registers as students arrive in the morning and at the beginning of lessons. Students' punctuality is also very good. Fewer students arrive late than pupils in the main school.

18. Sixth-formers' attitudes to the school are excellent. They study hard and are keen to take an active part in the life of the school and the wider community. They are willing and confident to take a high level of responsibility. Those who move up from Year 11 and those who transfer from other schools, both male and female, quickly settle down to become a part of the whole school. The school's highly effective induction programme helps ensure successful integration into the sixth form and the school as a whole. Sixth-formers take on a high level of responsibility for a range of activities at a house and whole school level, including fundraising for charity, sport and, for those who choose, prefect duties. These activities are managed effectively by a team of senior prefects co-ordinated by two head students. The latter make regular reports to the governing body. One was observed making a confident and lively report to the governors and expressing strong views about standards and prefects' responsibilities.

19. The behaviour of sixth-formers is excellent. Indeed, they form part of the school's disciplinary system, observing at break-times and helping generally around the school as well as welcoming visitors. They are courteous and polite.

20. In two general studies lessons students showed themselves knowledgeable and keen to learn by the informed and sensible questions they put to visiting speakers and their participation in a political debate between two ex-pupils. This reflects a high level of maturity and personal development.



## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **good** quality of education. It has a strong inclusive ethos built upon the traditions of the past and blended well with the aspirations of the present. Its level of care and support for pupils is one of its strengths as are the opportunities it provides for enrichment activities. In spite of the limitations and poor environment imposed by its often unsatisfactory accommodation, staff and pupils create a well-ordered sense of community where learning is valued.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **good** across the school. Overall the assessment of pupils' work and the use made of assessments are **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a very good command of their subject.
- There is an insistence on very high standards of behaviour.
- Pupils' application and productivity is always at least good.
- The use of a range of teaching methods is limited in some subjects.
- There is inconsistent assessment practice, so that pupils often lack a clear understanding of how to improve in the short term.

### Commentary

21. As the statistics below indicate, teaching is good or better in over eight out of ten lessons. It is rarely unsatisfactory. This shows improvement since the last inspection and is evidence of the success the school has had in focusing its school improvement plan on this aspect of its work. The good teaching results in good learning taking place. A higher percentage of very good lessons were seen in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11 where teachers tended to be more directive.

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 149 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	41(27%)	82(55%)	22(15%)	4(3%)	0	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.*

22. Teachers' very good command of their subject, coupled with high expectations and well-motivated pupils, provides a firm foundation for the good and very good teaching seen in nearly all subjects. With the exception of design and technology, there are examples of very good teaching in all main subject areas. In art and physical education all lessons are good or very good. In the best lessons a range of different teaching strategies ensures that all pupils are engaged in their learning. An improvement in mathematics teaching is due to the increased amount of activity and interaction that develops pupils' ability to use and apply mathematics. In music very good planning means that time is well used and pupils acquire their knowledge and skills through productive and often independent activities.

23. Teachers are often good at explanation as seen, for example, in science, but sometimes this can lead to pupils becoming passive as in some geography lessons. The use of ICT has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now used very effectively to improve learning in subjects like science and design and technology. In some subjects, such as art, history, modern foreign languages and mathematics, there is scope for further development, building on the skills acquired in the good discrete ICT lessons. In some classes, teachers do not plan sufficiently well to meet the differing needs of all pupils. In English, for example, some higher and lower attainers are



underachieving and in science some middle ability pupils could do better. In design and technology there is also a lack of match between tasks set and the ability of the pupils.

24. Teaching and learning for pupils with SEN are good overall. Teachers generally have a good awareness of SEN pupils and make use of the individual education plans (IEPs). They take them into account in their preparation of work but do not always offer the different provision these pupils often require. Where these pupils get additional support during lessons this is always good and improves their learning. Teachers, too, are generally supportive providing individual monitoring, assistance and encouragement. Pupils with SEN are socially well integrated into classes.

25. Good specialist teaching is provided for one pupil with English as an additional language. The level of competence of the few pupils for whom English is not their mother tongue is such that they cope adequately with the demands of the curriculum. There is no specific identification of gifted and talented pupils and in some subjects their needs are not fully met.

26. Homework is used effectively throughout the school to help pupils develop independence in learning and to reinforce work covered in lessons. Most parents believe pupils receive an appropriate amount.

27. Teachers' marking is generally good and pupils and parents appreciate this. Some teachers provide helpful informative comments but this is not consistent across the school. Data generated from national and standardised tests is used well overall. It provides a basis for long-term departmental planning and for longer-term targets for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Except in mathematics and modern foreign languages, pupils and parents are generally unaware of National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 and pupils are not set targets in line with national assessments at the end of Year 9. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are not set short-term targets that would help them achieve their longer-term expectations. Many aspects of the assessment process are good, including self-assessment and regular reporting to parents, but overall there is currently a lack of coherence and consistency in practice which restricts pupils' capacity to improve.

## **Sixth Form**

The quality of teaching and learning is **good** and so, too, is assessment.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers' knowledge of their subject is very good.
- Teachers' generally use a good range of strategies to help ensure learning.
- Students are well motivated and take their work seriously.

### **Commentary**

28. In more than nine out of ten lessons teaching and learning were good or very good. There was no unsatisfactory or excellent teaching. In the focus subjects, teaching is consistently very good in French, computing and music. It is good in English literature, mathematics, chemistry, biology, geography, history and leisure and tourism. Teachers have very high expectations of students, who rise to these expectations very positively. Teachers' very good subject expertise is used to good effect in their careful explanations. In the best lessons teachers ensure students' understanding by using a variety of strategies that involve student participation, such as question and answer, discussion, or mini assignments. The pace of the lesson is brisk because activities are well planned and tasks timed. Examples of these features were seen in French, music, psychology and sociology lessons. Sometimes teachers rely too much on more responsive students such as in English. In the best lessons there is also a very good use of resources such as in computing. In a Year 12 history lesson, very good use was made of the interactive whiteboard to provoke discussion.

29. Female students are well integrated into classes and take an equal part with the males. So too are students with SEN who learn well. Assessment of students' work is good in the sixth form.

Teachers are aware of the level of each students' attainment on entry based on their GCSE grade. Work is regularly marked, targets are set at a 'stretched' level and, with a combination of self-review and teacher assessment, students know how to improve.

## The curriculum

The range of subjects offered is **satisfactory**, enhanced by **very good** enrichment opportunities. Overall accommodation and resources are **satisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good opportunities for enrichment through a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, especially in sport and music and through good community links.
- Well-qualified staff successfully meet the demands of the curriculum.
- Pupils with SEN have full access to the curriculum by being effectively supported in normal lessons.
- Statutory requirements are not met in the design and technology curriculum in Years 7 to 9.
- Accommodation limits opportunities for wider provision and, in some areas, pupils' learning.

## Commentary

30. All National Curriculum subjects are included in the curriculum, together with religious education. Statutory requirements are not fulfilled in design and technology in Years 7 to 9. A second modern foreign language is provided for all pupils in Years 8 and 9. Three separate sciences are offered to higher ability pupils in Years 10 and 11. As from next year all pupils will have a discrete lesson of ICT and in Years 10 and 11 study for a short GCSE course. All pupils have a period of personal, social and health education (PSHE). This includes elements of citizenship and from Year 9 careers education. All pupils also have a games session in addition to physical education during which pupils are coached for a range of sports and school teams have opportunity to practise. The time allocations made to different subjects are appropriate.

31. There is a good match of staff to the curriculum in most subjects. The use of non-specialists in physical education and in history does not have any significant negative impact upon the standards reached. There is good additional study provision in the form of a homework club and revision classes during the Easter holidays. A number of departments extend their curriculum by field visits such as in geography and modern foreign languages.

32. The school's extra-curricular provision is a strength. There is a comprehensive programme of activities to cater for all pupils in the school and the majority are involved. Sport activities include rugby, hockey and cricket and a full list of fixtures allows for competitive games to be played. Many pupils are involved in music either in the wind band, jazz band or in the school choir. The annual school production is a popular event. There is a senior and a junior debating society and a popular chess club. The school is proactive in responding to pupils' needs for extra-curricular activities and the school council puts forward new ideas. As a result the school now offers football as an additional activity. A number of school journeys add to the cultural development of pupils. The school has developed links with clubs and societies which offer additional provision and further coaching.

33. The age of the buildings, with the narrow corridors and different sized classrooms make much of the school's accommodation a difficult environment for both teaching and learning. However, the refurbishment and grouping of subject classrooms since the last inspection have brought about improvements in provision as, too, have further renovations such as the creation of a drama studio. In spite of the constraints of the accommodation, pupils still learn well. The quality and quantity of resources used for learning vary from unsatisfactory to good across departments. They are satisfactory overall. The library is situated in the school's former chapel and has character, providing a good environment for learning. It is generally well used and the range of books is being systematically built up to replace a large amount of old stock.

## Sixth Form

The range of subjects offered is **good**, enhanced by **very good** enrichment opportunities. Overall accommodation is **poor** although resources are generally **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum has been broadened to cater for the needs of a wider ability profile.
- Subjects are being introduced, such as psychology, to meet wider aspirations.
- The AVCE course in leisure and recreation and travel and tourism are particularly successful.
- The sixth form accommodation is poor with limited social space and often cramped teaching rooms.
- Changing facilities for male students are unsatisfactory.

### Commentary

34. The school offers a good range of traditional AS and A level courses to meet students' needs and aspirations. It is increasing its collaboration with other sixth form providers in Thanet to ensure the needs of all students are met. A quarter of the students is female and about a fifth of all students is from non-selective schools. Most students study courses leading to A level but some mix AS or A level with AVCE. Most students aspire to higher education and the inclusion in the curriculum of subjects such as business studies, computer science and sports science widens their opportunities.

35. All students follow a general studies course to examination level. This incorporates their statutory religious education although the time allocated to this is limited. It also makes very good use of outside speakers to address current issues and enter into debate with students. During inspection a representative from a Palestinian organisation presented his perspective on the middle-east crisis and two former students fronted a political debate. The course makes a good contribution to citizenship and personal development.

36. Further enrichment opportunities are open to students including work experience, community service and service within the school. In addition a wide range of extra-curricular activities continue to be on offer.

37. Accommodation for the sixth form is poor. The social area is housed in the basement of the main building and is inadequate for the number of sixth-formers. A discrete ICT facility adjacent to the common room is equally poor. Students have decorated these areas themselves in order to provide as attractive an environment as possible. Many classes are conducted in small cramped rooms with few facilities and some subjects have no set base. There are no adequate changing facilities for males when both sexes participate in sport. However, with the otherwise satisfactory learning resources that are available and the use of classrooms in the main school this deprivation is not reflected in the standards that pupils achieve. It is a credit to the students and teachers themselves that standards achieved are as good as they are, in spite of the accommodation.

### Care, guidance and support

The school ensures that the pupils are cared for, guided and supported **very well**. It provides **very good** personal support and guidance. Pupils' involvement in the school's work and development is **very good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are very good.
- Pupils have very good access to well-informed support, advice and guidance as they progress through the school.
- There are very good induction arrangements for pupils.
- Pupils are given good impartial guidance on further study or career opportunities.

## Commentary

38. The school has very good procedures in place for the protection of its pupils. There is well-documented guidance on child protection. There are regular health and safety checks to ensure that pupils work in a healthy, safe environment. The staff are generally vigilant and are constantly reminded of risk assessments and health and safety issues. The impact of cramped corridors on care and safety of movement is difficult and can create points of hazard, but there are frequent safety checks. Black spots are carefully monitored. Lunchtime and breaktime supervision are good. All work-experience placements are checked out by the local education authority. Specialist establishments are used for residential activities.

39. Each pupil has the opportunity to have a trusting relationship with one or more adult in the school. Peer mentors provide support, particularly for the younger pupils. Each Year 7 pupil has a professionally trained Year 9 or 10 peer mentor. Pupils are also supported very well by their year heads, house tutors and the school counsellor, and the behaviour support service and education welfare officer when appropriate.

40. Tutors have regular team meetings, where academic and personal progress are discussed and appropriate action taken. There is a Pupil Praise system where certificates are given for good work, behaviour and contribution to school life.

41. Pupils are helped to settle well when they join the school. Year 6 pupils from the primary schools are invited to visit before they join the school and they start a day early at the beginning of term when they are introduced to a peer mentor. Interviews take place for Year 11 pupils for ease of transition for those who intend joining the sixth form. Impartial careers and further study advice is given to all Years 10 and 11 pupils through personal, social and health education lessons, work experience and help from outside school through Connexions.

42. The school council gives pupils the opportunity to voice their views and have a say in the running of the school. Some year groups are given questionnaires on how they think the school can be improved. The staff listen to their suggestions and some ideas have been put into action.

## Sixth form

The level of support, advice and guidance offered to sixth-formers is **very good**. So too is their involvement in the work and development of the school. Every effort is made to ensure a healthy and safe environment in spite of poor accommodation.

## Main Strengths and weaknesses

- Highly effective induction process.
- Female students are successfully integrated into the school.
- Support and guidance is integral to life in the sixth form.
- Poor accommodation limits social interaction.

## Commentary

43. The head of sixth form, with his assistant and a team of tutors, work hard to provide the highest level of individual support to students. There is a week's comprehensive and successful induction programme prior to admission. For those who elect to join the sixth form, the guidance given before they enter gives them all the necessary information to make informed and well-founded choices about their courses. Criteria for three main 'routes' are clear and students are provided with a structured programme that helps ensure their time is well used both for academic and personal development. Expectations are high and checks and monitoring are rigorous but students recognise and appreciate the efforts being made on their behalf. Retention rate as a result is high.

44. Great care is taken to integrate and support female students, many coming from non-selective schools. Female staff have been used as sixth form tutors and in addition a school counsellor and school nurse are available for all students. As a result female students settle in quickly and integrate very well.

45. Throughout the sixth form there is ample opportunity for students to become involved not only in the activities of the school but also to influence decisions. Sixth-formers take an active part in the school council and their own sixth form committee. Regular surveys of student views are conducted and acted upon. They act as role models in many aspects of school life as they hold various posts of responsibility. In this way they have a positive effect on the ethos of the school.

46. The headteacher, the head of sixth form, his deputy, and the head of careers play a full part in offering guidance on career choices. Good links have been established with three Oxford college and with admission tutors at a number of universities. A personal adviser from Connexions is available on a weekly basis and there is a well-equipped careers resource next to the school library.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with its parents are **good**. Its links with the community and other schools and colleges are **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The parents' views of the school are very positive.
- The school provides a very good range of information about the school, particularly about pupils' effort, attainment and progress.
- The school's links with the community and other schools and colleges are very good.
- The school is proactive in gaining sponsorship from local businesses for a number of school and pupil activities.
- Some parents were critical of parent consultation evenings, because they do not manage to see all their children's teachers.

## Commentary

47. The school's links with parents are good. An active Friends' association supports the school by raising funds for extra resources - currently, to support the school's application for science and mathematics college status. The Friends are also a good conduit for assessing parents' responses to new proposals, for example the recent change to the lesson times. Parents are particularly appreciative of the information that the school provides for keeping them informed of their children's progress. They receive a written progress report every half term and a detailed end-of-year report. Some parents, however, do express concern that they are unable to see all the teachers at consultation meetings which are very well attended. Parents are also kept informed through the pupils' diaries, which are usually signed by parents to acknowledge that homework has been completed properly.

48. Parents of pupils with SEN speak highly of the support they receive. Communication between home and school is good and parents are always involved in the annual review of IEPs.

49. The school has very good links with the community. Much of this comes through music, drama and sport. As music is a special strength of the school, concerts, involving a wide range of music, are much appreciated by the community. Apart from the pupils taking part in sport at all ages across the school and with other schools, many pupils play for local clubs which might not be able to survive without the support they receive from pupils at Chatham House.

50. Very good links are forged with local businesses. Through these links come sponsorship and grants. For example, there is a significant grant from a multinational pharmaceutical company and university sponsorship from another company. A major food chain sponsors the school's business studies team, which is taking part in the national finals in Scotland. A major petroleum company is sponsoring an environmentally friendly 'green car' project. The school is taking part in the national finals of this project. The many different projects in which the school takes part raises awareness of the school within the wider community. Through these many activities, the self-esteem of the pupils is raised and this is making a very good contribution to their achievement.

51. The links with other schools and colleges are also very effective. Induction from primary and junior schools is very good with staff visiting the different feeder schools and pupils visiting Chatham House prior to admission. Two primary headteachers speak very highly of the way Chatham House handles this transfer. Another local grammar school headteacher speaks of the good co-operation between the two schools. In one example of co-operation, two pupils who were causing problems were exchanged and they progressed and were able to complete their education successfully.

## **Sixth Form**

The links between the sixth form and the community and links with other school's and colleges are **very good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The major links with local sporting clubs.
- Sixth-formers are encouraged to participate in community service through Millennium Volunteers.
- The school is active in developing links with local grammar and non-selective schools to help establish appropriate provision across the area.
- The school makes very good use of outside agencies in the general studies course.
- The school has very good induction procedures for students transferring from outside school directly into the sixth form.

## **Commentary**

52. As at ages 11-16, the school has very good links with parents and the community. Many students, who take part in sporting activities at school, play for their local clubs. This enables many of the clubs to survive. The links through music are also strong.

53. Other schools and colleges appreciate the part that the school plays in ensuring that the students, moving on to further education, chose the right courses. Two parents, one whose son moved from private education and another who transferred from a mixed school, spoke of the sensitive way the school handled the move. They praised the school for the advice they gave on different courses, enabling the students to progress well on the appropriate chosen.

54. Sixth form students benefit from the many links built up with the local community and businesses. The headteacher's colleagues in the Ramsgate partnership praise the links. The principal of the local technical college described the headteacher as 'a strong man in the local community'.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher and key staff is **good**. The effectiveness of the school's management is **satisfactory**. The overall governance of the school is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well.
- The governing body helps to shape the vision and direction of the school well.
- The headteacher provides good leadership and with other key staff has a very good clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations.
- Some of the school's statutory duties are not fulfilled and this aspect of the governance is unsatisfactory.
- The implementation of policies and sharing of good practice are not consistent across all departments.

### Commentary

55. The governance of the school is overall satisfactory. In spite of improvements since the last inspection in the use of the local parish church, governors fail to ensure that the school fully fulfils its statutory duty to provide a daily act of collective worship. Also some aspects of the statutory curriculum in design and technology are not being met. In both these respects governance is unsatisfactory. However, governance is effective in many other respects. The governing body of the school has a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They ensure this by making regular visits to the school and reviewing departmental development plans with the head of subject with whom each governor is linked. The governors are active in helping to shape the vision and direction of the school and are good at challenging and supporting senior managers to raise standards and improve provision.

56. The headteacher provides good leadership along with other key staff. He is very well respected in the school, in the community and by fellow professionals. There is a strong and effective senior leadership team which together provides clear direction and has brought about significant improvements since the last inspection. The leaders of the school at all levels are good role models for other staff and pupils and their commitment to inclusion, promotion of equality and concern for the needs of the individual is excellent. This quality of leadership in the school motivates and influences pupils and staff well. However, while leadership is good overall, management is currently not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that policies and action plans are consistently implemented across all areas of the school. Some middle managers are not ensuring that strategies are in place to ensure that their aspirations are realised and standards are as high as they might be, thus limiting overall improvement.

57. The senior leadership team monitors performance data well, taking action where necessary. Test and examination results are scrutinised and action plans for improvement drawn up with heads of subject. Regular reviews take place but the impact of these is not consistent across all departments. Staff performance management is in place and its effectiveness is bringing about improvement, particularly in the quality of teaching. Recent professional development days have focused on key issues related to the needs of the school, as identified in the school improvement plan. This plan focuses on appropriate issues and provides a good basis for improvement. Departmental plans are integrated well and this is an improvement since the last inspection. The induction of new staff, including that for newly qualified teachers, is very good and the two teachers concerned spoke very highly of their induction programme.

## Financial information

### *Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003*

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,311,009	Balance from previous year	-32,702
Total expenditure	2,276,584	Balance carried forward to the next	34,425
Expenditure per pupil	2,903		

58. The school's approach to financial management, which helps the school achieve its educational priorities, is very good. This year, partly because of increased staff costs, a deficit budget of £50,000 has been approved with the necessary recovery plan in place. The school has a very effective and experienced bursar, who manages the budget very well on a day-to-day basis and the headteacher and a very effective finance committee support her very well. All members of the governors' finance committee have a wide experience of business and finance and monitor effectively. The school's commitment to the principles of best value is very good. All non-teaching staff make a good contribution to the smooth running of the school.

### Sixth Form

The leadership of the sixth form is **very good** and the management is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head of sixth form leads a very effective team of sixth form staff.
- There are clear policies and procedures for staff and students that help achieve the high aspirations set for students.
- There is a good improvement plan that is clearly related to the school improvement plan.

### Commentary

59. The governors fulfil all their statutory responsibilities in respect of the sixth form apart from providing a daily act of collective worship. They monitor the work of the sixth form alongside that of the main school. During inspection a senior student gave an impressive report to a formal meeting of the governing body on current issues in the sixth form.

60. The head of sixth form is a very good leader and contributes very well to the overall school vision for the sixth form. He is ably supported by his assistant and by a team of tutors. There are very clear structures to ensure that the very high aspirations for the pupils are achieved. There is good female representation in the tutor team to help support female students new to the school. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. Good support is given to teachers new to the school by the head of sixth form. Data is used well to monitor the standards being achieved in the sixth form as well as to set targets for students. As a result of the high quality of leadership and management, numbers continue to rise and retention rates are also high. The sixth form's self-evaluation is very good and it strives to improve quality and standards.

61. The senior prefect team, led by a male and female senior prefect, makes a good contribution to the management and ethos of the sixth form as well as to the smooth running of the school as a whole.

62. The school's finances show that that the sixth form is cost-effective. Though the sixth form subsidises the main school, this is judged to be marginal. The judgement takes into account that no premises costs are charged to the sixth form nor are the promotional elements of the induction programme. The sixth form is effectively raising the ambition and aspiration of the local population.



# **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

## **SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4**

### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

#### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Detailed assessment of pupils' work shows them how to improve the quality and presentation of their work.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge enables pupils to make good progress.
- A strong focus on literacy helps pupils to widen their vocabulary.
- The use of a limited range of teaching styles and insufficient targeting of work for pupils of differing abilities leads to underachievement by some high and low attaining pupils.
- Literacy strategy is in place in Years 7 to 9 but insufficient structure and pace in some lessons means that some pupils are not sufficiently clear about the purpose of their learning.

#### **Commentary**

63. Results are well above the national average in Year 9 and in GCSE English and English Literature in Year 11. Results are below those in similar schools in Year 9 but there is a wide range of ability on entry. Standards are good in Years 10 and 11 and pupils achieve well in both years as a result of teachers' good subject knowledge and a focus on assessment that helps pupils to understand how to improve their work. Year 10 pupils can identify similes and metaphors in a study of war poems and compare the poems effectively. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are good, leading to good achievement by pupils. Year 9 pupils understand and can use the conventions of screenplay writing in work based on Edwin Muir's 'The Horses'. The trend in results is upwards in Year 11. Year 9 results were slightly below those of the previous year but evidence in current work is that standards continue to be above average. This is due to a close focus on literacy and more targeted assessment. Monitoring of teaching is carried out on a regular basis. Pupils are given additional support with Progress Units in Year 7 and 'booster' classes in Year 9. Pupils with SEN make similar progress to other pupils as a result of the support they receive. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

64. Speaking and listening skills are well developed in pupils in all years. Year 11 pupils use quotations effectively to support arguments, for example in a lesson on 'Macbeth on Trial'. In Years 7 to 9 pupils can describe and use parts of speech effectively but a limited range of teaching styles restricts pupils' use of speaking and listening skills.

65. Pupils are provided with good opportunities to read and discuss a wide range of literary and non-literary material. Year 11 pupils read novels for implicit and explicit meaning, as shown in a discussion on racism and misogyny in 'Of Mice and Men'. Teachers identify key words in texts and discuss their meanings. Year 8 pupils can use 'scanning' techniques to identify key points about characters and can describe characters' personality, appearance and use of dialogue. Pupils from Year 8 upwards make notes on what they have studied in class and use them to produce extended writing. The Reading Awards scheme in Years 7 and 8 encourages wider reading.

66. Pupils' writing skills are well developed in all years. Discursive writing skills are not as well developed or used as creative skills, especially in Years 7 to 9. Year 10 pupils can write emotional essays for and against capital punishment. Year 8 pupils can write effective acrostic poems on homelessness.

67. Teaching and learning is almost always good in Years 7 to 9. Clear explanation of key points and subject terminology leads to effective learning. Insufficient use is made at present of targeted correction of specific errors to help pupils to improve. In Years 7 to 9 teachers are making good use of the literacy strategy. However, some 'starters' are used to practise techniques rather than to reinforce learning. The structure and pace of some less effective lessons needs to be strengthened. Insufficient use is made of plenary sessions to summarise what has been learned. Teaching and learning are always good, sometimes very good, in Years 10 and 11, but teachers occasionally spend too much time talking to pupils. The use of ICT mainly focuses on word processing and Internet research. The new drama studio has widened opportunities to include drama in the curriculum, using clubs, an inter-house competition and theatre visits.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

68. A literacy policy has been introduced but is not yet fully in place. It has been effectively introduced in English lessons in Years 7 to 9 and the nationally recommended three-part lesson structure is in place. Other subjects have also introduced literacy into their subject. Classroom displays feature subject-specific terminology and meanings are explained clearly to pupils. Many subjects give pupils practice in developing independent note-taking skills (especially in ICT) and give consideration to written and presentational aspects in documents for specified audiences. There are relatively few opportunities for pupils to speak to a specific audience, for example by making presentations to a class or group. The 'Literacy for Languages' lesson in Year 7 makes insufficient use of tasks for pupils of differing abilities. Targeted assessment of pupils' work to improve literacy skills is underdeveloped. The introduction of literacy targets for all pupils is a promising development. The lack of a literacy co-ordinator reduces the effectiveness of literacy.

### **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

Provision in modern foreign languages is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of work in French and German are very good.
- Leadership of the department directs a strong focus on raising standards.
- Assessment procedures, especially in Years 7 to 9, are inadequate in showing pupils how to improve their performance.
- Pupils' speaking skills are not developed as well as they should be.

#### **Commentary**

69. GCSE results in both French and German are well above the national average, although they are below the average for selective schools.

70. Standards of work have improved since the previous inspection and are now very good in Year 9 and in Year 11. Pupils achieve well throughout the school. Their understanding of spoken and written language is very good. They have a very good knowledge of a wide range of vocabulary and of grammatical structures. However, because teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to use French or German, a large proportion of pupils lack confidence in speaking the foreign language.

71. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Lessons have a clear focus. Teachers plan lessons very well so that pupils readily take part in a variety of appropriate activities that develop their knowledge and understanding. A lively pace keeps pupils on their toes. Very good lessons were observed with Year 9 and Year 10 pupils, who assessed one another and practised making extended utterances. All pupils, including the most able, were suitably challenged and they responded well. A wider variety of activities is found in French lessons, but there is more consistency in the teaching of German. In some Year 8 and Year 9 French lessons, a minority of pupils is inattentive and holds

back the general level of performance. Assessment procedures that let pupils know what they need to do in order to improve their performance are more effective in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. The older pupils have developed a good understanding of GCSE grade criteria.

72. Leadership of the department is good. Schemes of work are well prepared and there is a strong focus on raising standards. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Most classrooms are too small to hold 30 pupils comfortably, and learning activities are therefore restricted. The head of department has a clear vision and leads by example in his teaching skills. He offers good support and direction to his colleagues. The relative weaknesses in assessment procedures and in the standards of pupils' oral skills have been recognised and are being addressed. Procedures for checking the effectiveness of teaching in the department are inadequate. Not all teachers have sufficiently sharp targets that relate to their classroom practice. Strategies to disseminate across the department the existing very good practice and so raise standards further are not effectively planned. These factors limit the rate of improvement in standards achieved.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The effective implementation of the national mathematics strategy has led to good overall progress and individual achievement by the end of Year 9.
- Pupils have very good competence in mathematics, particularly in number.
- The development of the breadth of teaching and learning strategies has led to the department's continuous improvement in national examinations.
- Teaching is good overall and leads to all but a very few pupils making at least satisfactory progress.
- The leadership of the department is good.
- The monitoring of pupil achievement and the impact of some plans and policies, particularly the use of ICT, lack precision.
- The use of continuous assessment to provide individual pupils with short-term targets to improve achievement is underdeveloped.

### **Commentary**

73. The department has been effective in using their analysis of attainment data to construct ability groups and target pupils by placing them on 'catch-up' programmes just before examinations. Results in national examinations in Year 9 are very high; they meet the targets agreed with the local education authority and reflect the good overall progress and pupil achievement during Years 7 to 9. The most able pupils in each year are currently working at one or two levels above national expectation. Progress in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory and leads to a high percentage of pupils attaining GCSE grades A\* - C. Some pupils are accelerated to take GCSE in Year 10. However, the school expresses some disappointment about the final percentage of pupils that attain grades A\* - B by the end of Year 11 when it compares its results with pupils' prior performance and the results gained in English and science. Although pupils are regularly assessed and informed of their levels of attainment they are too infrequently made aware about what they need to do to improve. The school's results in all national examinations show a rising trend over time despite the erratic trend over time in the overall ability of the Year 7 intake.

74. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, particularly in Years 7 to 9 and Year 11 where its quality is more consistently good than in Year 10. The amount of activity and interaction that develops pupils' ability to use and apply mathematics has increased substantially since the last inspection. In Year 11, pupils who achieved a good GCSE in Year 10 are appropriately challenged by the statistics course and the other courses they follow. Specific

strengths in the teaching and learning are evident when teachers use their subject knowledge and expertise to link ideas across different areas of mathematics, relate new learning to pupils' real-life experiences, and use resources effectively to enable pupils to sharply focus on new knowledge, skills and understanding. This results in good learning where pupils achieve well by displaying interest and working productively together, for example when 'Scrabble' is used to explore experimental probability, and graphical calculators and paired work are used to solve equations and explore the characteristics of different types of curves. There are fewer examples of good teaching in 'non-accelerated' Year 10 classes. Pupils are challenged by what they have to do but the overall pace of progress is slower because there is a lower incidence of stimulating activity.

75. A new scheme of work, closely linked to the national Key Stage 3 Strategy and the school's literacy across the curriculum policy, is being imaginatively introduced in Years 7 to 9. The impact has been to raise the level of pupil enthusiasm and ensure good progress and achievement in understanding number and mathematical vocabulary through problem solving and discussion. Pupils' ability to calculate, discuss and use pattern is developing their understanding of algebraic expressions and the associated terminology. Learning across Years 7 to 11 would be further enhanced by the use of computers. Although the schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 clearly identify the use of ICT, lesson planning and departmental monitoring do not ensure its implementation.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

76. The use of mathematics by pupils across the school is very good. The development of mathematics as part of the teaching and learning in other subjects has commenced with training and a thorough audit of the use of mathematics by all departments as recommended in the national Key Stage 3 Strategy. A school numeracy co-ordinator has been appointed and the mathematics development plan identifies the further enhancement of links between the mathematics department and the remainder of the school whereby mathematics teachers will be able to support other departments. This provides the opportunity for teachers to build on existing good practice, for example in geography where Year 7 pupils are learning about grid references and contours while simultaneously plotting graphs in mathematics.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good results at the end of Years 9 and 11.
- Teaching and learning are good leading to good achievement.
- The use of ICT is a strength of the department and enhances learning.
- Students are well motivated.
- Some middle ability pupils, particularly in Years 9 and 11, could achieve better.

### **Commentary**

77. The national examination results at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were well above average but well below average when compared with similar schools. Results improved in 2003. The dual award results at GCSE in 2002 were well above average, but the number of pupils achieving A\* - C grades fell slightly in 2003. Results for pupils who entered the three separate science examinations in 2002 were above average and improved in 2003, with all pupils achieving A\* - C grades. Overall there has been an improvement in standards since the last inspection.

78. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average in all years and the achievement of pupils is good, including those with SEN. Pupils in Year 9 are able to describe the

structure and functions of various organs of the body; they displayed a mature and sensible attitude towards the dissection of a pig's trotter, showing competence in practical skills. Year 11 pupils are able to discuss Newton's laws of motion with confidence and carry out the analysis of results from a relevant practical session. The written work of all pupils is of a high standard, with very few exceptions. The attitude and behaviour of pupils during lessons is very good and they are well motivated. They handle apparatus with care and share ideas and co-operate with each other in a mature and sensible manner. They listen attentively, are keen to answer questions and remain on task during written and practical work.

79. Teaching is good overall in all years and sometimes very good, although there could be more opportunities for independent learning for pupils. The use of ICT is well developed and attention is paid to literacy by emphasis on key words in science by teachers and by very good wall displays. Number skills are successfully practised in the use of scientific formulae and the drawing of graphs appropriate to the science curriculum. Lessons are well prepared and teachers have sound subject knowledge, enabling them to give clear explanations to pupils to enhance their learning. Homework is set on a regular basis and is used to reinforce work covered in lessons. Pupils' work is carefully marked and annotated with clear guidance on areas for improvement. The schemes of work reflect the requirements of the National Curriculum and the examination board. Assessment and target setting are very good, with regular testing, the results of which are held on a centralised database as well as by all teachers for their individual groups.

80. The leadership and management of the department are good and staff work to promote the continued achievement of very good examination results. The introduction of a new course for Years 7 to 9 is designed to improve the results in the national examinations. Extra-curricular activities include involvement in the national Green Power competition, which has involved pupils in the building and racing of an electric car, in which they have become Southern England champions. The department has forged good links with local primary schools. The accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall, and the department is well equipped with computers, having its own designated suite. The department receives very good technical support from three technicians, who are also responsible for the attractive and informative wall displays.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision for information and communication technology is **good**.

- Teaching is good and pupils achieve well.
- Provision has improved greatly in recent years.
- The department is well led.
- There is only one specialist ICT teacher and pupils' work is not always assessed accurately.

### **Commentary**

81. On entry, pupils' skills in ICT are in line with national expectations. Teacher assessments for 2003 at the end of Year 9, indicating skills well above average, were inaccurate, overestimating their attainment. In fact, their skills are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 9 when they embark on a course leading to the Short Course GCSE examination. Over the next two years they make good progress, leaving Year 11 with above average skills. In 2002, eight out of ten candidates were rewarded with A\* - C grades. Unvalidated data for 2003 show similar performance the following year. Because of major improvements, standards are still rising and work seen during the inspection week was generally better in all years. Pupils achieve well, although at present not all Year 11 pupils follow a course of study in ICT as they should.

82. The main reasons for rising standards are first, the increased amount of ICT teaching time provided to all students in Years 7 to 11 which now meets minimum expectations and second, improved resources. The 780 pupils now share 150 PCs and 40 wireless notebook computers linked to the school's network and its up-to-date operating system, with twin broadband Internet lines. The

school ensures that every pupil has an e-mail account, and each ICT room also has an interactive whiteboard.

83. Teaching and learning are good. The resources are used well and careful planning ensures that the time available in lessons leads to real gains in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Pupils are confident with the technology and well-rehearsed routines, such as logging on and using search engines for Internet research, add pace to the lessons. Homework is used effectively to extend learning and pupils respond well to open-ended investigative tasks that require them to use their initiative or to experiment. The scheme of work pupils follow gives them particular strength in using computers to control events in Years 7 to 9 and in data handling in Years 10 and 11. The work is sometimes not challenging enough and learning is less effective when they are taught skills they already know, for example from primary school. Pupils are very well behaved but often passively quiet in lessons.

84. Pupils' experience of ICT has improved markedly since the last inspection and the head of department's leadership and management of the wide-ranging changes have been impressive. He articulates a clear vision and good ideas for further development, and has introduced a number of valuable innovations both in the curriculum and the use of resources in recent years. The team of non-specialist teachers is given good quality individual support but departmental quality assurance procedures are undeveloped. In particular, the quality of assessment has been a weakness. The Key Stage 3 teacher assessments for 2003 were notably overestimated owing to misapplication of prescribed criteria. The department has only one specialist ICT teacher and others who teach the subject up to GCSE level lack confidence in the use of assessment to support and to spur further learning.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

85. Provision of ICT resources across the curriculum is good, and teachers now have easy access to PC or wireless notebook computers. These opportunities are not yet fully exploited, except in science and design and technology where confident teachers and pupils make regular use of ICT, including for data capture (measuring), graphing and digital imaging. Across the school, pupils practise skills in word processing and research via the World Wide Web, making use of the school's own useful website, and graphical calculators are used in mathematics. The art, history and modern foreign languages departments, however, make less use of ICT than is commonly found in schools.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision for geography is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE results in 2002 were above the national average and they show improvement in 2003.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and experience which raises standards.
- Teaching methods in some lessons do not take enough account of the abilities of different groups of pupils.
- The use of ICT is limited and restricts learning.

#### **Commentary**

86. Although standards of attainment are above average the percentage of A\* and A grades at GCSE are fewer than nationally and the school's results are amongst the lowest for grammar schools. In 2002 pupils did less well in geography than in their other subjects. Standards in lessons are above the national expectations in each key stage. Achievement overall is good. Pupils answer

questions well when given the opportunity and draw very well on secure prior learning in formulating perceptive geographical questions. On entry some pupils have lower than expected standards in geographical skills and knowledge, and in writing ability. The department has good strategies to promote both geographical writing and spelling. Enquiry techniques are developed effectively by, for example, studying effects of out-of-town shopping centres on Ramsgate. By Year 9, pupils use high-level subject vocabulary with ease and show good understanding. They describe and explain well land use in Norway. Mapping skills are well developed. Diagrams show care, detail and accuracy. Attainment is above national levels.

87. In Years 10 and 11 pupils work with care and effort. They achieve a sound basis for GCSE examinations. When explaining tectonic and volcanic events pupils show good knowledge and understanding of geographical processes. Discussion of ethics of genetically modified farming contributes to citizenship. Coursework standards are mostly high but, for some pupils, unsatisfactory coursework depresses attainment in GCSE examinations.

88. The quality of teaching is good. In two of the seven lessons seen, it was at least satisfactory and the rest were good or very good. Objectives in teachers' planning are clear but are not shared with pupils. Marking and assessment are sound. Teachers skilfully describe geographical processes and explain new concepts. Teachers understand the special educational needs of some pupils and give them satisfactory personal support. Gifted and talented pupils, however, are not clearly identified and extended. Work in lessons does not take sufficient account of the different needs of higher and lower attaining pupils so some do not achieve as much as they could. Teaching in some lessons is too didactic and limits pupils' geographical experience. Where teaching is good pupils have greater independence in their work, strategies are varied, greater use is made of modern technologies and learning is active rather than passive.

89. Management and leadership are sound. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory, particularly in teaching and learning methods and ICT. A sound plan is in place to effect further improvement.

## **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE results are consistently above the national average.
- Standards of work are good.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- There is not enough use of ICT.

## **Commentary**

90. GCSE results have consistently been above the national average.

91. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are above national expectations. This represents good achievement through the key stage. Pupils of all abilities show increasingly good factual knowledge and a good grasp of the basic skill of chronology. A good example of the use of skills was seen in a Year 8 lesson, where pupils demonstrated good understanding of the problems of poverty in Tudor England, effectively using sources to reach relevant conclusions.

92. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above national expectations. This represents good achievement through the key stage. Pupils gain good examination skills and can explain effectively historical issues. A very good example of this was seen in a Year 10 lesson, where pupils took part in a simulation exercise which required them to assume the positions of the 'big three allies' at the

Versailles Treaty of 1919. They were able to argue competently the issues for each country and where compromise might be reached.

93. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are well planned and taught at a good pace. There is very good encouragement of pupils who are well challenged to think through historical problems. The pupils respond with very good attitudes towards the subject. Overall, they are well involved in the lessons, although some instances of passive learning were seen. There is insufficient use of ICT although a few good examples were seen.

94. The leadership of history is very good, with a clear vision for the development of the subject. Documentation is thorough. There are regular department meetings and teaching is effectively monitored. The department leads a very good programme of extra-curricular activities for all year groups, including regular visits to the battle fields of the First World War, which pupils find very moving, as well as extending their knowledge. The accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory, as it is scattered, causing problems for the teachers. Also, it is often cramped. There is inadequate room for pupils' display work and the main teaching room is in a poor state of decoration.

95. The improvement since the last inspection has been good. Pupils now work more independently and with greater purpose. Numbers opting to study the subject in Years 10 and 11 have risen and results have improved.

## **Religious education**

Provision in religious studies is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The successful introduction and implementation of the GCSE short course.
- A team of well-qualified teachers who are very secure in their subject knowledge.
- Good leadership and teamwork.
- Limited teaching and learning styles.
- Lack of use of ICT in the classroom.
- All pupils do not fully understand how they can improve their levels or grades.

### **Commentary**

96. Standards in Year 9 are above the expectations within the Kent Agreed Syllabus. This represents good progress and achievement for most pupils, including the small percentage identified as having special educational needs. Pupils demonstrate good factual knowledge and a sound understanding of concepts, such as when discussing the existence of God. There is strong evidence of extended writing from pupils across the key stage, demonstrating a positive interest in the subject.

97. All pupils now study a short course for GCSE in Years 10 and 11. Standards in Year 11 are above average. This represents good progress and achievement for most pupils. Pupils are able to analyse and debate issues such as euthanasia and animal rights to a high level. Homework is used to extend pupils' knowledge and is marked in line with examination requirements. The first GCSE cohort was examined in 2003. These results will serve as a useful benchmark for future year groups.

98. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Where it is very good, teaching methods are innovative and pupils show a high level of interest and participation, which results in a challenging pace and a good use of extension work. Where it is less than very good, there is a lack of variation in teaching strategies and the needs of all pupils are not met. In these lessons there is an undue emphasis on whole class teaching. Learning is further restricted by a lack of use of computers and weak assessment system that fails to inform pupils sufficiently on how they can improve.



99. The leadership of the department is good, providing a sound role model for innovative, imaginative teaching styles. There is a strong commitment throughout the department to raising standards. Departmental staff meet regularly to discuss and minute issues related to teaching and learning. Further monitoring within the department of both staff and pupils will serve to raise standards and ensure good progress is made. Since the last inspection schemes of work at Key Stage 3 have been revised in line with requirements and the GCSE short course has been introduced into Years 10 and 11 so that the school now meets its statutory requirements for religious education.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

Provision in design and technology is **unsatisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good use of computer aided design (CAD) and computer aided manufacture (CAM).
- Relationships and mutual respect between the teachers and pupils are good.
- Insistence on high standards of behaviour is very good.
- The requirements of the National Curriculum are not being met in Years 7 to 9.

#### **Commentary**

100. Results in GCSE in design and technology examinations in 2002 were well above the national average. There was a drop in results in the 2003 examinations and it was one of the lowest scoring subjects in the school.

101. Standards in the current Year 9 are below the national average. This represents unsatisfactory achievement for most pupils. They are unable to achieve higher standards because the expectations and the challenges of the work are very low, particularly for the high achievers. Statutory requirements are not being met, as there are no systems and control included in the curriculum, or opportunities to work with a wider range of materials. Pupils do not currently have the opportunity to experience a broad, balanced and appropriate curriculum.

102. Standards in the current Year 11 are average, so achievement is less than satisfactory for the ability of the pupils. The use of the laser cutter has introduced industrial practices into the curriculum and produces work of a professional quality. The depth of the research and background theory work in Years 10 and 11 is inhibited by the lack of modern textbooks, which prevents many pupils gaining the higher grades.

103. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. A strong feature of the effective teaching is the good questioning techniques used to enable the pupils to think through their own design ideas. Good use of computers supports learning. The weakness in teaching is where the pace is slow and activity uninspiring. In Years 7 to 9 the teachers are not sufficiently matching the demands of the work to the abilities of the pupils. Assessment is not shared with the pupils to help them improve their learning. Large classes in Years 7 to 9 make lessons difficult to manage.

104. No practical lessons were observed or evidence provided of pupils' previous practical outcomes, so no judgement on standards of practical skills and quality outcomes could be made.

105. The leadership of design and technology is poor. Curriculum 2000 has not yet been introduced, including National Curriculum level assessment in Years 7 to 9. Schemes of work are still evolving and do not take into consideration progression and differentiation. There has been minimal improvement since the last inspection. Although the department has worked hard to improve

their accommodation, displays lack dynamism and vitality. Good links with a neighbouring school enable some pupils to study GCSE food technology in Years 10 and 11.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

Provision in art is **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very high standards attained at the end of Years 9 and 11.
- The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good.
- The use of ICT needs further development.

#### **Commentary**

106. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were nearly all Level 5 and above. This represents very good achievement from below average levels on entering the school. GCSE results in 2003 were very good, with all except two out of 24 pupils entered attaining grades A\* - C. This is a significant improvement on the 2002 results which were themselves well above the national average.

107. Standards in the current Year 9 are as expected at this early stage in the school year. Nevertheless this represents very good achievement since they entered the school in Year 7 with well below average skills and knowledge. Most pupils show average drawing and painting skills but readily learn to use, for example, various grades of pencils and shading to delineate light and dark areas, and indicate the direction from which the light comes. There are opportunities to work in three dimensions in ceramics and other mediums and to engage in various kinds of printing. The works of a good range of artists are studied. Art specific vocabulary is well understood. By such means pupils are taught to explore and develop ideas and acquire knowledge and understanding of art and artists. The creative use of ICT is at an early stage, hampered by lack of computers; however, some use is made of appropriate software in conjunction with a digital camera.

108. Standards in Year 11 are above average with predicted GCSE grades in the range A\* - B. The 20 pupils in the group, including those with SEN, attained very high levels in their end of Year 9 teacher assessments and continue to achieve well and make very good progress. Drawing and painting skills are above average and work in three dimensions is of a good standard. Pupils analyse and evaluate their own and other artists' work, and develop good independent habits of study and research.

109. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers are accomplished artists and are good at passing on their skills to pupils. Good use is made of gallery visits to broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding. Behaviour in the art department is very good and orderly, and there are good routines in place for starting lessons and for clearing up. Assessment is very thorough and gives pupils a very good idea of how they are progressing and what needs improvement. It also provides teachers with clear ideas about which aspects to focus on for further development.

110. The department is well led and managed. Since the last inspection good standards have been maintained and some improvement in the provision for ICT has occurred. The school is aware of some health and safety issues in this area of the building and is taking steps to remedy these. There is no technician to support the work of the department.

## Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results for 2003 were very good with over nine out of ten pupils attaining A\* - C grades.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Facilities for ICT are very good.
- A substantial number of pupils - nearly one fifth - receive instrumental lessons.
- Extra-curricular groups are well supported and achieve high standards - one exceptionally good group has reached the final stage of the National Youth Makes Music Festival, and will participate in the concluding 'Prom' at the Albert Hall.
- There are no significant weaknesses.

### Commentary

111. Standards in the current Year 9 are above average, representing very good achievement by most pupils, including those with SEN, since they entered the school in Year 7. Knowledge and understanding of the key elements of music and the vocabulary that goes with them are good, and practical music-making skills, for example accurate performance of complex rhythms, are well developed. Many students enhance their musical knowledge and understanding with the study of an instrument from the wide range available.

112. Standards in Year 11 are very high with predicted grades for GCSE entirely in the range A\* - B. The good sized cohort of 27 students attained very high levels in their end of Year 9 teacher assessments, representing very high achievement which they continue to maintain. Knowledge and understanding of composing is very good and makes successful and creative use of ICT when appropriate. Performing is well developed, achieving advanced standards, and analytical listening skills are very good. These elements come together exceptionally well, for example, in composing and performing melodies to a ground bass.

113. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and practical musical skills, for example aural skills, which they are able to develop well in their pupils. The very good teaching of such fundamental matters as pulse, rhythm and pitch provides a secure basis on which the very good standards of pupils at all stages are achieved. Pupils acquire their musical knowledge and understanding very well, and work with a high degree of independence and productivity. Planning and the pace of lessons are very good, so that all the time available is well utilised. Assessment is thorough and all pupils are made aware of how they are doing and how to improve, and teachers know which aspects to concentrate on at any stage.

114. Leadership and management of this busy department are very good. The curriculum is well planned and there are many opportunities for pupils to develop their musical talents. The numerous instrumental groups at their different levels, for example, make it possible for pupils from near beginner to highly advanced stages of proficiency to engage in suitably challenging performances. Concerts and shows featuring this work are frequent, and much appreciated by the school and community. The strong group of teachers who contribute to the work of the department are well led and managed by the very able head of department.

115. Since the last inspection there have been a number of improvements, notably to the accommodation, and the very good and well used ICT provision.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment are above national expectations.
- Provision for extra-curricular sport is very good.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Games staff are not deployed so as to maximise their strengths and there is inconsistency in coaching practices.
- Assessment at the end of Year 9 needs refinement.

### Commentary

116. Standards across the school are above national expectations and achievement is good for the majority of pupils. However, the department would benefit from moderating assessment with other schools to provide accurate teacher assessments at the end of Year 9.

117. In Years 7 to 9 pupils are able to reflect and evaluate on previous work in lessons. They are encouraged to explain reasons for particular activities. They understand the reasons for a warm up, the names of major muscle groups and appropriate stretching exercises. Teachers challenge pupils to improve their techniques through praise, encouragement and high expectations. Most pupils succeed and benefit from their achievements. Teachers' planning ensures that special educational needs are addressed. In Year 8 games the majority of pupils are performing above national expectations. However, a minority are not achieving as well as others due to the deployment of teachers.

118. In Years 10 and 11 standards are above national expectations. The Year 10 rugby squad demonstrated good ball handling skills and running lines during a two on one drill. Pupils understand the need for the ball carrier to draw the defender and for the support runner to come from deep. The weaker coaching of foot movement and communication limits achievement. There is a need to improve the consistency of teaching rugby skills across the school. The development of a teachers' rugby manual will help support good teaching.

119. In Year 11 GCSE ICT is used to good effect. The pupils have developed skills of analysis and evaluation when reviewing presentations. Teaching methods allow for pupils to develop a range of learning skills, for example the use of discussion to explore social implications of sport issues. One example of good practice dealt with the issue of stereotyping of gender within sport.

120. The extra-curricular sports provision is a strength of the department. Fixtures are arranged throughout the school year allowing pupils to compete against teams from other schools. Many staff are involved in supporting this provision which contributes to the personal and social development of the pupils.

121. The department is well led and managed. Across the school pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum, which fulfils the requirements of the National Curriculum. There has been an improvement in the curriculum since the last inspection. Years 7 to 9 pupils experience an outdoor and adventurous activity and pupils are given time to reflect upon and evaluate their work. Departmental documentation has been developed which includes appropriate schemes of work. The gym is small and limits the development of sports. However, additional provision is available at the local sports centre. The sports pitches are well maintained.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

### CITIZENSHIP

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Citizenship is taught to every pupil in Years 7 to 11.
- A newly appointed advanced skills teacher is helping develop the status of the subject.
- There are inconsistencies in teaching.
- Assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress is not sufficiently well developed.

#### Commentary

122. The standards in citizenship are satisfactory. The subject is mainly taught within the school's PSHE programme, which gives access to all pupils. Other subjects such as English, history, geography and religious education also contribute. The scheme of work is securely based on national criteria and was drawn up after a curriculum audit in 2001. Thirteen teachers are involved across the years and the recently appointed advanced skills teacher is helping develop the subject effectively.

123. The quality of teaching and learning, based on very limited evidence, is satisfactory. Where the teaching is good, the lessons are well planned and the pupils are fully involved with the work. A good lesson was seen in Year 9 where pupils discussed effectively issues of racism and how it can be tackled by society. There were instances of unsatisfactory teaching, caused by lack of planning and work that did not match the attainment of the pupils.

124. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory. Appropriate schemes of work cover the areas of PSHE and citizenship, with issues common to both. Meetings are held regularly to consider progress. As yet, there is no formal scheme of assessment and neither teaching nor the progress of pupils is monitored. A start has been made on pupils' self-evaluation of their work in Years 7 to 9 and future planned developments include meeting assessment, monitoring and reporting requirements. There are good links with outside bodies, such as the police and the local community. Some pupils in Year 9 have attended a citizenship conference run by the local youth council and some Year 10 pupils participated in a conference day for the East Kent Business Partnership in 2002. The work of the school council is an effective application of citizenship. A good start has been made, but the subject is still developing.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, ten subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses were sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002 where more than five candidates were entered for the examination. The AS level results are for those students who dropped subjects at the end of Year 12 or who studied for AS level in Year 13.

### Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	5	20.0	33.2	60.0	81.6	26.0	33.2
Chemistry	8	37.5	36.9	87.5	84.4	37.5	35.2
English literature	6	33.3	37.9	83.3	94.4	31.7	38.9
General studies	10	0.0	25.7	60.0	78.6	18.0	30.0
Geography	8	25.0	36.4	75.0	88.3	27.5	36.3
Information technology	6	50.0	20.6	66.7	78.2	31.7	28.5
Mathematics	22	31.8	34.3	59.1	74.2	23.2	31.3
Physics	10	0.0	36.2	70.0	82.0	23.0	34.3
Sports/PE studies	5	40.0	27.7	100.0	88.2	38.0	33.8

### Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	21	57.1	36.3	100.0	91.6	90.5	74.1
Business studies	33	42.4	32.8	100.0	96.4	84.2	76.5
Chemistry	6	66.7	45.9	100.0	94.0	96.7	81.1
Media studies	17	64.7	36.8	100.0	98.3	91.8	81.1
Economics	8	62.5	45.8	100.0	96.2	95.0	83.1
English literature	29	41.4	43.7	100.0	98.5	89.7	84.3
French	5	60.0	46.1	100.0	96.2	92.0	83.0
Design and technology	5	20.0	35.5	80.0	95.3	64.0	76.5
General studies	95	29.5	29.1	95.8	90.1	74.1	69.3
Geography	25	16.0	40.5	100.0	97.1	64.0	80.9
History	16	37.5	41.0	100.0	97.1	88.8	81.2
Information technology	25	16.0	22.4	92.0	89.1	66.4	64.1
Mathematics	21	47.6	52.2	100.0	93.3	91.4	84.7
Physics	16	50.0	42.8	100.0	92.8	86.3	78.6
Religious studies	5	0.0	44.0	100.0	96.3	72.0	82.2

Sociology	11	63.6	39.6	100.0	95.4	92.7	79.1
Sports/PE studies	13	7.7	29.5	100.0	95.4	63.1	73.2

***Level 2 vocational qualifications***

Qualification	Entry	% gaining A-B		% gaining A-E		Average Points Score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Travel and Tourism	7	14.3	15.7	100.0	88.1	71.4	61.4

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English literature and French.

### English literature

The overall quality of provision in English literature is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' substantial expertise helps students to learn well.
- The course attracts many students, most of whom complete the full two years.
- Marking does not sufficiently show students what to do to improve.
- Teaching lacks variety of method and teachers over-rely on responses from a few students, so that others do not take sufficient responsibility for their learning.

#### Commentary

125. Although results at A level have fluctuated between 1998 and 2002, they have always been at least in line with, and often above or well above, national averages. Results for 2003 are an improvement on 2002. The trend in results is a rising one. The six students who finished their AS course at the end of Year 12 in 2003 all obtained at least a pass grade.

126. Standards at the end of Year 13 are well above average. Students achieve well because they experience a wide variety of challenging texts. They receive substantial practice at writing and their work folders show that most make comprehensive notes and refer to a range of critical and reference sources. Their learning is well supported by teachers' notes and other background material. As a result, at the least, students' written work is conscientiously thorough and knowledgeable, although at times there is over-narration and lack of a clear structure to the argument. At the best, writing is highly sophisticated, fluent and analytical. Students benefit from the strong emphasis on written accuracy and an enriched vocabulary. In Year 12 students are still coming to terms with the demands of an advanced level course, but most are already making good gains in knowledge and understanding. They begin the course with well above average standards of attainment at GCSE, and the challenge will be to ensure they are fully stretched.

127. Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. A consistently strong feature is teachers' subject expertise. Their knowledge, understanding and range of literary reference enable them to explain successfully and inform thoroughly, so that students benefit from understanding the detail of a text as well as grasping its wider themes and message. In discussions, teachers do tend to over-rely on the contributions of a few students so that others do not take their full share in the responsibility for learning. Teaching strategies are often limited, so that, for example, the overuse of explanation or 'question and answer' slows the pace of a lesson. This affects lesson timing, so that opportunities for review or consolidation at the end of a lesson are missed. Scrutiny of students' work shows that marking, although encouraging and supportive, does not sufficiently show what students should do to improve.

128. The subject is led well, with a clear emphasis on high standards combined with support for the individual student. Management is also good, with effective deployment of teachers and careful monitoring of progress. The increasing number of students taking up the course is testament to the effectiveness of the subject.



## French

Provision in French is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and leads to the attainment of high standards.
- The number of students who continue their studies after completing the AS course is low.

### Commentary

129. The number of Year 13 students in recent years has averaged five. Therefore, a comparison of results with national figures is not very meaningful. There has been no consistent pattern with regard to the number of candidates who gain A or B grades at A level, but three of the eight candidates in the last two years have gained A grades. Only one candidate in the last six years has failed to gain at least grade E.

130. Standards of work seen during the inspection are very good in both Years 12 and 13. Students speak quite confidently, with good pronunciation. They have a very good range of vocabulary. They are beginning to come to terms with discussing abstract topics, but they betray some limitations in their ability to engage in extended dialogue. Progress at this stage of their sixth form courses is good. They are also developing a capacity to write at length on a range of topics. They make some elementary errors and there are some weaknesses in the use of tenses, but most mistakes arise from attempts to use more complex grammatical structures. The content of their writing reveals the application of mature thought and a very well developed response to literature. Year 12 students are at an early stage of their AS course. They have highly developed listening skills, and their knowledge and understanding of grammar are good.

131. As at the last inspection, the sixth form teaching is very good. Teachers have a very good command of the language. Their high expectations of students are reflected in the challenge found in the tasks they set them to do. Teachers know their students well and have a very good understanding of their individual needs. Consequently, students themselves are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. They respond with interest and they work hard to make progress and to achieve success.

132. The management of French in the sixth form is good. There is a clear, well-planned scheme of work. The teachers involved work well as a team. They have a firm commitment to improved standards. Much thought has gone into possible means of improving the retention rates of students at the end of Year 12. Changes to the teaching programme and to its organisation have been implemented and they are having a beneficial effect upon students' work and attitudes.

## MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics, biology and chemistry. In addition one period of physics in Year 12 was observed. The teaching was good with students building successfully on their A and B grades at GCSE.

### Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is continuous improvement in A level results.
- Teaching is good overall and leads to all but a very few students making good progress.

- Female students are successfully integrated into the group.
- The leadership of the department is good.
- The department's induction programme does not provide sufficient information and input about 'thinking skills'.

### Commentary

133. Using their analysis of performance data the department effectively organises students into ability groups that attain an A level in mathematics and/or further mathematics by the end of two years. A small number of students are accelerated to attain A level in one year. The drop-out rate is small and the examination results in Year 13 at grades A\* - B is above the national average. Obtaining entry to the sixth form is dependent on good GCSE grades and as a result the performance in Years 12 and 13 shows a rising trend over time. The induction programme, mainly aimed at the female students joining the sixth form, focuses on the personal and social requirements of a sixth form education. However, because the aptitude of all students to cope with the demands of A level is not assessed prior to commencing the courses, teachers are increasingly required to adjust the curriculum to improve 'thinking skills'. This they do expertly and successfully.

134. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection with a much higher proportion of good and very good teaching. The excellent use of class interaction and resources, such as graphic calculators, develops pupils' thinking skills and ability to use their pure mathematics within the 'applied' modules. Specific strengths in the teaching and learning are:

- teachers using their subject knowledge and expertise to link new ideas back to the GCSE curriculum;
- placing new learning in historical and real-life contexts;
- intellectually challenging students so they interact with others and interpret outcomes;
- using the correct mathematical vocabulary.

This results in good learning where students achieve well, show a high level of interest and work productively together.

135. The integration of female students is very good. Although they represent a small percentage of each class the good quality of the teaching and learning ensures that they are actively engaged. For example, in an average ability Year 12 lesson a group of female students raised issues about how the frequency distribution changed as the sample size increased. The subsequent discussion with the teacher enhanced the understanding of the relative locations of different measures of average for all students. They achieved well because their ability to articulate their understanding of different averages developed the capability of all students to define aspects of skewed frequency distributions.

### Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and facilitates learning.
- Results are well above national averages.
- Larger group sizes mean that practical work is sometimes limited due to insufficient apparatus.
- More independent learning could take place.

### Commentary

136. The A level results in 2002 were well above national averages and all students achieved a pass. There was a slight drop in the results in 2003 and, although all students passed, fewer gained the higher grades. The AS results followed a similar pattern. Retention rates in biology are very good.

137. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average and these are achieved because of good teaching and the positive attitudes of the students. In relation to their standards at the start of Year 12 their achievement is good and they make good progress as they move through the sixth form. Students in Year 13 displayed a high level of practical skills during a microbiology lesson and evidence from their notebooks indicates a clear understanding of biological molecules and their importance to life. Year 12 students have a good knowledge of plant physiology and are building on work covered at GCSE level.

138. Teaching in biology is good, enabling students to learn well. Teachers have sound subject knowledge, which enables them to give clear explanations to students and help them to understand difficult concepts. Lessons are well planned and have a brisk pace, which maintains the interest of the students. Teachers' expectations are high and they question students frequently during lessons to reinforce knowledge and understanding. Friendly working relationships between teachers and students mean that students are not afraid to ask for help if they need it. Much of the teaching is teacher led, although there are some opportunities for independent learning. Marking of students' work is thorough and gives helpful advice on areas for improvement. Assessment takes place regularly and students are always aware of their progress. Homework is set on a regular basis and is used to reinforce work covered in lessons, often comprising past examination questions. The department makes good use of outside agencies, such as nearby universities and local industry with whom they undertake some project work, which further promotes the interest of students.

139. Students learn well and make good progress in lessons because of the good teaching and because they are mature and highly motivated. Many of them need to do well in biology because of their career aspirations, which further motivates them. They respond well in lessons, rise to challenges, as shown in question and answer sessions, and their written work shows evidence of hard work. Answers to written questions are clearly explained and show clarity and depth of thought. They display competence in practical skills and work co-operatively together, sharing ideas in a mature and sensible way.

140. The department is well led and managed and there has been an overall improvement since the last inspection. Assessment and record keeping are very good and regular meetings take place so that the staff can share ideas. The accommodation and resources are satisfactory, although larger group sizes now mean that some of the larger equipment necessary for sixth form work, such as colorimeters and microscopes, is insufficient, which can inhibit the amount of practical work done. The department receives very good support from a specialist technician.

## **Chemistry**

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards improved steadily up to 2002 when they were well above the national average for selective schools. Achievement is good.
- Students respond to teachers' enthusiastic approach and make good progress.
- The quality of teaching and learning is always good or better but students are not always given, nor do they always take, the opportunity to initiate discussion and challenge concepts.
- Assessment is good and targets are set but the work in students' files is not monitored.

### **Commentary**

141. The unconfirmed results of the 2003 A level examination were lower than those of the previous year although they were still above the 2002 average. The performance of males was better than that of females. Many students failed to attain the grades predicted by their AS performance but achievement overall was satisfactory. About one third of the students who started in 2001 did not complete the full A level course but many of these had sound reasons for not doing so. Standards in

the current Year 13 are above national expectation. Students' recall is good and they are able to apply their knowledge to new situations. Their skills of investigation are generally very good although female students lack confidence in their own ability. Students in Year 12 have settled down well to their post-16 studies. Standards attained are already beyond those expected at GCSE level with students showing a good knowledge of atomic structure and of basic organic chemistry. In one lesson observed they developed a very good understanding of intermolecular forces through a study of alkanes. Achievement is good.

142. The quality of teaching and learning in both years is always good or better. Students are enthusiastic and have a desire to learn. They respond well when directly questioned, and higher attaining students frequently give very comprehensive answers indicating a thorough understanding of the topic under discussion. They are, however, reluctant to initiate discussion or challenge concepts. Teachers' expectations are high and an excellent rapport ensures that individual students' problems are identified and appropriate help given. The minority of female students are included in all aspects of the lesson. In a well-prepared lesson, Year 13 students completed a very challenging worksheet on aldehydes and ketones. Individuals were then asked to elaborate their answers using an interactive whiteboard. Excellent progress was made both in the consolidation of knowledge and in communication skills.

143. Students are assessed through periodic tests and coursework. Targets are set and appropriate advice given. The work, which students do in their files, however, is not often marked or monitored. Management has not ensured that teachers new to the A level course have received the support that is required.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

### **Computing**

Provision for computing is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good and students achieve well.
- Students undertake challenging A level projects.
- Students have insufficient opportunities to discuss and collaborate.

### **Commentary**

144. On entry, students' prior attainment is broadly average. They have good grades from GCSE examinations, but few have followed a full-course GCSE in ICT previously. They make this ground up and in 2002, A level results were broadly average while the unvalidated data for 2003 indicate a sharp improvement with half of the 16 candidates awarded A or B grades. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above average in both Years 12 and 13, confirming the improving trend.

145. Teaching and learning are very good and students achieve well. Enthusiastic, well-informed teaching, coupled with good planning and imaginative use of resources, make for rapid learning. Students respond keenly to challenging questioning and they offer thoughtful and perceptive answers. They develop independent research skills through probing homework tasks and they thrive when allowed to explore the technology and experiment with the software for themselves. However, they are offered insufficient opportunities to discuss collectively and to learn the skills of collaborative problem solving needed by successful systems analysts. Introduced to object-orientated programming through the use of Visual Basic 6, students undertake demanding A level projects in which they design testable solutions to business problems.

146. Students value the high quality support, advice and guidance they receive from knowledgeable and experienced staff. They have a good appreciation of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

147. Wide-ranging improvements and innovations have been introduced since the last inspection such as Visual Basic programming and readily accessible wireless notebook computers. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has a clear vision for the development of the subject and a determination to provide the best opportunities possible for students.

## **HUMANITIES**

148. The focus subjects are geography and history. In addition, lessons were observed in religious studies, sociology and psychology. No lessons were observed in the general religious education modules followed by all sixth-formers but one lesson of AS and one of A level religious studies were seen. Standards in the two lessons are above average and overall progress and achievement are satisfactory. Students display a positive attitude to their studies and work well with each other and their teachers. One Year 13 lesson of A level sociology was observed. The teacher made good use of questioning to successfully develop students' understanding of Gramsci's political theory. In a challenging lesson students achieved very well. Psychology has only been introduced into the curriculum this year. Two Year 12 lessons with different groups of students were observed. In both lessons the teaching was good, with high levels of challenge and participation. Students are well motivated and, coupled with good teaching, achieve well.

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge, experience and enthusiasm.
- Lessons have clear structure and are well planned and resourced.
- Some teaching is over prescriptive and encourages dependency.
- Fieldwork opportunities are excellent.
- Standards at A level are erratic but show a trend of improvement.

### **Commentary**

149. In 2002 A level results were well below national averages and students did less well than in their other subjects. Standards were very much better in 2003 when more than half the 26 candidates attained the higher A - B grades. Observation of lessons and analysis of work show standards are above average. Since the students started on the courses with above average levels of GCSE attainment, these standards represent sound progress.

150. Students show good knowledge and understanding of physical and human geography. Supported by sound structured resources and clear direction they work well on physical topics. They respond equally well to human topics requiring lateral thinking and greater independence and organisation. They collect information from a variety of sources and form sound judgements from the data. Map and graph interpretation is good. These skills produce fieldwork assignments of a high standard. Students make very effective use of new technologies, including the Internet, to enhance the accuracy, range and presentation of their work.

151. Overall, teaching and learning are good because expectations are high. Internet sources are employed very well to provide relevant, topical and interesting information, statistics, photographs and articles to challenge higher attaining students and extend others. Teachers give effective support to slower learners and those with special educational needs. Students criticise teaching where links

to examination requirements are unclear. They are also dissatisfied when work is not marked and returned promptly. Assessment practices otherwise are good and students have clear targets. Number skills are developed well as when correlating population density against population change using Spearman's rank. Students have good command of technical subject language. Male and female students alike display very positive attitudes and speak highly of the quality of teacher support and encouragement they receive. Fieldwork opportunities are excellent and a very important factor in enhancing understanding of, for example, karst features in the Mendips and urban developments around Wells. There is good growth in geographical maturity in oral work and in writing by the beginning of the second A level year.

152. Work in the subject is led and managed soundly with capacity for further improvement. Teachers are well motivated and focused on achieving high results for their students. Some very good use is made of new technologies to enhance teaching and learning. However, provision is not as good as at the previous inspection.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A level results are consistently above the national average.
- Standards of work are good.
- There is not enough use of ICT.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory.

## Commentary

153. A level results have consistently been above the national average. Standards in the sixth form are above national expectations. This represents good achievement, building on prior examination results. Students show a good grasp of historical skills. They handle sources well, showing increasing maturity in the use of evaluation and interpretation. A good example was seen in a Year 13 lesson where students were able to show effectively from documents why Fascism ultimately failed in Italy.

154. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are well planned, with a variety of activities sharply focused on stimulating students' learning. Teachers use questions skilfully in challenging students to think about issues. They respond very well and explore topics in depth. A good example was shown in a Year 12 lesson, where student presentations on the interactive whiteboard led to a good discussion of the economic problems facing Germany after 1918. However, there is not enough use of ICT overall. There is good use of past examination questions in order to show how answers should be constructed. Students have full work files, which contain many good examples of their own research.

155. The leadership of history is very good, with a clear vision for the development of the subject. Documentation is thorough and teaching is effectively monitored. Assessment of students' work is securely based on examination criteria. The department organises visits to A level conferences, which strengthen the learning of the students. The accommodation is unsatisfactory, as it is scattered and teaching groups are cramped in some of the classrooms.

156. Results have improved since the last inspection and numbers taking the subject have risen. The students state that they are well taught and enjoy their work in history. Many of them wish to take the subject further, which is a tribute to the good teaching they receive.

## ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

157. There was no focus or sampling in this area.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

158. The focus was on music but art and media studies were also sampled. In art, examination results at AS level in 2003 were satisfactory, and at A level were high. At A level, students achieved as expected given their GCSE grades. One lesson was observed in creative problem solving which included good work in sketchbooks based on detailed research. There is no dedicated space for students to work in. The teaching in the Year 13 media studies lesson was very good, enabling students to grapple successfully with issues around post modernism through extended discussion.

### Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCE A level results in 2003 were very high.
- Students are achieving well.
- Teaching is very good, helping students to build their musical knowledge and skills very effectively.
- The subject is well led and a good range of extra-curricular activities and learning resources are available.
- There are no significant weaknesses.

### Commentary

159. GCE A level results in 2003 were very high with 80 per cent of students attaining grades A - B, albeit from a fairly small group. No figures for national comparisons are yet available.

160. The standard of work of current students is above average. In Year 13 the details of Baroque harmony are well learned and students recognise significant features of the style readily. These present considerable challenges to their aural capabilities which are achieved well as a consequence of demanding teaching. Students have advanced performing skills which complement their other skills well.

161. Students in Year 12 are only a very little way into their course but are achieving well in relation to their GCSE grades. The move from GCSE to AS work is quite dramatic but students appear to be coping well with it and developing good independent learning skills. Knowledge and understanding of basic harmony are being rapidly acquired, complemented, as in Year 13, by very good performance skills.

162. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Lessons are well structured with clear objectives and delivered at a brisk and challenging pace. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which enables them to analyse and remedy weaknesses instantly and provide further practice to overcome them. A good variety of strategies are deployed to help learning using, for example, changes of voice, pitch, instrumentation, written and aural presentation to reinforce ideas.

163. Students learn well. They are attentive, work productively and bring their knowledge gained, for example, from studying instruments, to bear on the problems before them. Such knowledge includes good habits of independent learning, an essential part of successful instrumental studies.

164. The very good teaching and learning arise from work in the subject being very well led and managed, and the very good opportunities that are provided, for performing at a high level. A very high proportion of sixth form students participates in these with consequent good gains in knowledge and skills.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

165. Leisure and tourism was the focus subject but within this some students also take leisure and recreation. Three sports science lessons were also sampled. Overall teaching was good. However, in a Year 13 class appropriate resources were not available which prevented teaching from being very good. Lessons were well planned and stimulating with very good use of imaginative strategies. Students were allowed appropriate time for discussion and debate. Students were developing a range of voice and demonstration skills for use in a coaching context. Standards were good for this time in the school year.

### **Leisure and tourism**

Provision in leisure and tourism is **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of work are well above average.
- Students make good or very good progress due to good teaching.
- Curriculum leadership and management are very good.
- Accommodation is too cramped.

#### **Commentary**

166. AVCE (Advanced Certificate of Vocational Education) combines leisure and tourism / recreation in the sixth form. Students can opt for either pathway. Year 12 students, newly started, are taking travel and tourism.

167. Standards overall are above average. Students, both female and male, achieve well, often very well, given their starting points at GCSE. Results in 2002 for the seven students entered were well above average for both A/B grades, and the pass rate of 100 per cent was almost twice the national average. These results maintain high standards from the previous GNVQ advanced course, where school results were consistently well above average. Unconfirmed 2003 results indicate similar standards. Grades for male students are lower than in 2002, but still above average, reflecting the nature of the intake. Current students have made a good start.

168. In lessons and work seen, students use ICT very effectively to independently research chosen tourist destinations or sports centres on a number of websites, visits and part-time jobs. Year 13 students critically discuss organisation charts from past examination papers and discuss their experience of job roles.

169. Their portfolios show very good development of customer service and team working key skills in several local organisations they use for their case studies. Work shows very positive attitudes. Year 12 students work effectively in pairs to present attractive PowerPoint slides on local leisure outlets researched. One higher attaining group critically analysed statistics from employees in local inns and hotels, based on work experience, with a rare maturity.

170. Teaching and learning in the small sample of four lessons seen were good overall, and there was one very good lesson. Teachers were very skilled in assessing students' progress and giving constructive feedback on how they could improve. Very good tutorial support to individual students reflected very good teacher/student relationships. Teachers' well-planned practical tasks helped



students develop a keen interest in their work and make the most of work placements or part-time jobs to gain good insight into the demands of the leisure and tourism industry. In a very good Year 13 lesson, the teacher, an excellent sports coach, enabled students to analyse and develop their coaching skills through group videos. Muscle movements were analysed to improve performance. This improved key communication and team working skills.

171. Curriculum leadership and management are very good overall, with staff being a close-knit team which meets regularly, formally and informally, to monitor student progress and plan new developments. This brings about improvement and helps raise standards. The range of equipment and materials used is very good. Marking standards are regularly checked. Students are very well prepared for both higher education and careers in the leisure industry. Since the subject was introduced, standards have remained high. There is good capacity for further improvement, particularly by enlarging the cramped accommodation to introduce leisure and tourism into the curriculum in Years 10 and 11.

## **BUSINESS**

172. One lesson was sampled from AS economics. Teaching was very good. Careful and thoughtful lesson planning and very good use of modern resources, coupled with skilful questioning, rapid pace and the effective use of deadlines, enabled students to make rapid progress and to achieve well. Students with little or no prior study of economic principles grasped the concept of the supply curve and were able to apply it to real situations such as the housing market. Results in economics A level have improved markedly in recent years. In 2002 results were well above average with over half the candidates awarded A or B grades and unvalidated results for 2003 show a similar picture.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

173. No subject was inspected in this area.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

174. All students follow a general studies course. During inspection only a Year 12 lesson was seen and this consisted of the whole year group listening and responding to a visiting speaker. Good use is made of outside speakers to give students the opportunity to hear points of view on a range of topical subjects. The lesson observed was one part of a two part series on the middle-east crisis. Most students listened with interest and some asked relevant and perceptive questions.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	3	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>		<b>2</b>
Attendance	2	2
Attitudes	1	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	5	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	4	4
The leadership of the headteacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	4

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).*

